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## **Cultivating the classics “in a cold climate”: the Foulis Press & Academy in Glasgow**

**Craig Lamont**

Robert (1707-1776) and Andrew Foulis (1712-1775) rose to prominence in Glasgow as booksellers and publishers under the mentorship of Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), the so-called ‘Father of the Scottish Enlightenment.’<sup>1</sup> Despite no major study of the brothers since David Murray’s *Robert and Andrew Foulis and the Glasgow Press* (1913), recent scholarship has identified their role in the production of classical texts during the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>2</sup> Following Philip Gaskell’s comprehensive *Bibliography of the Foulis Press* (1986), art historian George Fairfull-Smith has been the most active researcher of the Foulis brothers: organising an exhibition on the Foulis Press and Academy in 2001; publishing a companion text; and, more recently, tracing the Academy’s impact on the fine arts in Glasgow in *The Wealth of a City*, v. 1 (2010). Yet problems remain with our understanding of the brothers. This is mostly due to the commonplace narrative of their rise and fall as printers: talented in the art of publishing but distracted by an overambitious scheme of becoming connoisseurs of the fine arts in a city with no appetite for it.<sup>3</sup> The persistence of this story had led to the scholarly focus on the Foulis press

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<sup>1</sup> This epithet has been given to Hutcheson by many, as early as 1900 in William Robert Scott’s *Francis Hutcheson: His Life, Teaching and Position in the History of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900), p. 261.

<sup>2</sup> Their endeavours have been studied by scholars in the context of Glasgow’s Enlightenment-period development. See *The Glasgow Enlightenment* (1995), eds. Andrew Hook & Richard Sher; Richard Sher’s chapter ‘Commerce, Religion and the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Glasgow’ in *Glasgow: Beginnings to 1830* (1995), eds. Tom Devine & Gordon Jackson; Thomas F Bonnell’s *The Most Disreputable Trade: Publishing the Classics of English Poetry 1765-1810* (2008); and Brian Hillyard’s ‘The Glasgow Homer’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 2: Enlightenment and Expansion, 1707-1800* (2012).

<sup>3</sup> This metaphor is in part inspired by a poem dedicated to the Foulis brothers by the Earl of Buchan (1742-1829), in which they are described as ‘two glorious cooks’ of culinary dishes ‘high-relish’d – for the mind.’ The whole can be found in the University of Glasgow Special Collections (MS Murray 506, f. 65).

as their only worthwhile venture, obscuring crucial points about the Academy from view.<sup>4</sup> The first is the ambiguity surrounding the location of the Academy in the University grounds, which this essay will fully address. It will then be shown that the Academy made a direct and useful contribution to the brothers' press in both a practical and aesthetical sense.

Lengthy biographies of the brothers are hardly required in making new observations of their work. What might be re-emphasised is their dependence on the skills of their supporters. The first book Robert Foulis printed on his own, *The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus* (1742), was a collaborative effort by Hutcheson and James Moor, Professor of Greek. Hutcheson intimated that part of the intention in completing this work was to benefit Robert's aspirations as a classical printer.<sup>5</sup> The following April Robert Foulis printed *De Elocutione* (1743), inaugurating a long tradition of respected Greek editions in Glasgow, none of which have been more celebrated than 'The Glasgow Homer'.<sup>6</sup> The success of this edition was due to the strong relationship between the Foulis brothers and the College that flourished in the mid-1750s: besides helping bankroll the Academy, the professors personally fronted the costs of these famous editions of Homer.<sup>7</sup> And they had every reason to put their faith in the Foulis name: gaining momentum since Alexander Wilson (1714-1786) arrived from St. Andrews in 1744.<sup>8</sup> His

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<sup>4</sup> The need for a new study was highlighted by Helen Smailes of the National Gallery of Scotland, in her review of George Fairfull-Smith's *The Foulis Press and the Foulis Academy*, in the *Journal of the Scottish Society for Art History*, 7 (Oxford: White Cockade Publishing, 2002), pp. 80-83.

<sup>5</sup> *The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*, translated by Francis Hutcheson and James Moor, eds. James Moore and Michael Silverthorne (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2008 [1742]), p. ix.

<sup>6</sup> For more info on this 'edition', which actually contains *Iliad*, vols. I-II (1756) and *Odyssey and Homeric Hymns*, vols. III-IV (1758), see Brian Hillyard, 'The Glasgow Homer', *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 2: Enlightenment and Expansion, 1707-1800* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 70-80 (70).

<sup>7</sup> John Burnett, 'A Note on the Foulis Homer of 1756-1758', *The Bibliotheca; a Scottish Journal of Bibliography and Allied Topics* 12:2 (Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland, 1984), pp. 33-35 (33).

<sup>8</sup> See Thomas F. Bonnell's unpacking of the 'brand-name psychology' pertinent to the Foulis brothers adopted moniker, 'The Elzevirs of Glasgow', in his *The Most Disreputable Trade: Publishing the Classics of English Poetry 1765-1810* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 44.

appointment to the University as official type-founder was a turning point for the Foulis press.<sup>9</sup>

As Nicolas Barker remarks, Wilson's style exhibited a 'restrained and self-conscious elegance' hitherto unseen in Britain.<sup>10</sup> In the midst of all this, Robert's plans of opening an Academy of Art were well underway.

### *I. The Inscription of Glasgow College as a Seat of the Arts*

The earliest seeds of the Foulis Academy were sewn during the brothers' travels. In 1738, before Robert would commence as a bookseller in the College grounds of Glasgow, he travelled with Andrew: first to the University of Oxford then to Paris the following year where they resided for several months.<sup>11</sup> It is well known that this first trip inspired the brothers, and Robert in particular. He wrote fondly on the conversations he had with 'gentlemen of every liberal profession,' and on the 'mutual influence of the Arts and Sciences upon one another and upon Society.'<sup>12</sup> When they returned, Robert began selling books and made steps to print his own. Andrew's name first appears beside Robert's on a title-page in the *Works* of Theocritus (1746), and sporadically thereafter until 1749. From then on, both names featured together, though it would not be long until Robert travelled to the continent again – this time with their brother James – leaving to Andrew to handle the printing business alone.

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<sup>9</sup> In 1760, Wilson also became the first Professor of Practical Astronomy at Glasgow, and his works on sunspot activity carried out on College grounds are still referred to by scientists today.

<sup>10</sup> Nicolas Barker, 'The morphology of the page', *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* v. 5, eds. Michael F. Suarez & Michael L. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 248-267 (261)

<sup>11</sup> Details of their visit to England and France can be found in the Murray collection at the University of Glasgow: Sp. Coll. MS Murray 506; According to the notes and letters of the brothers in the Mitchell Library, they were shown a manuscript of Aesop's Fables in Oxford (32225, f.14[v]); David Murray notes that they were sent on a fact-finding mission for the University, looking for records of the Roman Catholic See of Glasgow believed to be held in the Scots College in Paris (1913), p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Murray (1913), 57.

This division of labour between Robert and Andrew became commonplace especially after the Academy opened. It was in 1751 when Robert and James left Glasgow to visit Greek scholars in Leiden and Paris to make progress with a much-anticipated edition of the works of Plato.<sup>13</sup> As early as 1746 chatter about this Plato had reached literary circles in London: John Wilkes (1725-1797) wrote excitedly to Robert Foulis in December that year asking if he was able to produce a ten-volume edition, and in what order the works might appear.<sup>14</sup> For twenty years the edition was put on hold despite a prolonged high-demand from the brothers' supporters. Robert had come to describe it as 'the long intended edition of Plato' when he wrote to William Hunter (1718-1783) in November 1766 thanking him for subscribing to it. It never came to fruition. Before long, Robert's mind became fixed on the idea of an Academy much more than his supporters would have preferred. Robert wrote from Paris in February 1752 describing his purchase of 'some designs that are Original & of the most celebrated Masters of the Italian, French, and Flemish Schools.' He had spent much of his time learning the history of painting: 'to know the stiles of the great Masters & what is particular to each School & how to distinguish the Original from the Copy.'<sup>15</sup> This is not to say that his pursuit of the fine arts alone derailed the Plato, but that during the crucial early years of the Foulis press the idea of an Academy became intrinsic to Robert's vision of the classical milieu being built in Glasgow. Carol Gibson-Wood has traced the lineage of art history in Scottish universities during this time, showing that George Turnbull's *Treatise on Ancient Painting* (1740) influenced the teaching of William Ruat, Professor of History, and his successor William Wight at Glasgow.<sup>16</sup> This aids our understanding of the Academy's roots.

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Ovenden, 'Foulis, Robert (1707-1776)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9991>, accessed July 2016].

<sup>14</sup> Manuscript: Mitchell Library 32225, f.17.

<sup>15</sup> David Murray, 'Some Letters of Robert Foulis', *The Scottish Historical Review* 14:54 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1917), pp. 97-115 (109).

<sup>16</sup> Carol Gibson-Wood, 'George Turnbull and Art History at Scottish Universities in the Eighteenth Century,' *Canadian Art Review* 28 (Universities Art Association of Canada, 2001-03), pp. 7-18 (12).

It was not solely a replication of a foreign model of art teaching witnessed abroad, but the continuation of a valuable school of thought particular to Scotland. The emphasis on the classical worlds of Egypt, Greece, and Rome in the art lectures in Glasgow provide a convincing parallel to the classical poetry enshrined in the Foulis press.<sup>17</sup> The fine arts, then, were hardly a blazing distraction from the respectable matter of printing the classics: they were a visual extension into that world.

Robert and James Foulis returned from the continent in 1753 with a French painter and engraver. The Academy was opened between the end of 1753 and the beginning of the following year.<sup>18</sup> Though the Foulis Academy predates the Trustees Academy in Edinburgh (1760) and the Royal Academy in London (1768), more important than its age was its unique attachment to a renowned printing press founded and managed *within* a University. Robert Foulis acknowledges this when he lobbied Lord Hardwicke (1690-1764) for support in March 1753, saying:

Some gentlemen may, perhaps, imagine, that as the Capital is the chief seat of encouragement for every ingenious Art, upon that account it is the propoest place for making an attempt of this kind: no doubt it will be always the place where many of the most eminent people who are to be bred up, are of great importance, is a question for which, perhaps, there is more to be said in the negative: a place of less expence, of fewer amusements, and both a manufacturing Town, and the seat of an University, is perhaps to be prefer'd.<sup>19</sup>

Robert is playing to his strengths here: talking up the benefits of supporting a home-grown, University-based community of artists in the arguably more dynamic – if less ‘amusing’ – social

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> For more particulars on the Academy teachers and pupils, see George-Fairfull Smith’s *The Foulis Press and the Foulis Academy* (2001) and Grier Gordon, ‘The Foulis Academy, 1753-1776,’ *Journal of the Scottish Society for Art History* 4 (1999), pp. 3-7.

<sup>19</sup> National Library of Scotland Special Collections: MS. 10782, ff. 53-7 (54).

milieu of merchants, traders, and bankers that Adam Smith observed before completing his *Wealth of Nations* (1776). Indeed, the selling-point of the arts benefiting manufacturing was a focus of the advertisement for the Academy in *The Glasgow Courant* (which the brothers themselves published between 1745 and 60), October 1753: ‘It is hoped that this Attempt will be favourably received by the Public [...] being not only the Foundation of the Fine Arts of Painting, Sculpture, Engraving, &c. but of the greatest Importance to the Perfection of ornamental Manufactures, not to mention its Usefulness in Mechanics, Experimental Philosophy, and the several Arts connected with them.’ Robert also believed in the Academy’s usefulness to ‘the Army and Navy; not to mention its use in illustrating what cannot be so well conveyed by words only.’<sup>20</sup>

Funds for the Academy were raised from prominent Glasgow merchants Archibald Ingram (1704-1770), John Glassford (1715-1783), and John Coats Campbell (1721-1804). One of the Academy’s best pupils, Archibald McLauchlan (*fl.* 1752-70) would go on to paint the infamous Glassford Family Portrait in 1767, with its much-maligned black servant in their Shawfield Mansion.<sup>21</sup> In essence, it was a private institution. Whereas the Dublin Society took over Robert West’s drawing school and integrated art teaching into a committee, supported by others on manufactures, chemistry, dyeing, minerology, fishery, and mechanics, the Foulis Academy’s attachment to the University was its main foundation, and the support from wealthy merchants was never enough to bring down the costs of the Academy and the press in its busiest

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<sup>20</sup> From a draft of the advertisement published in *The Glasgow Courant* 22-29 (October 1753), Edinburgh University Library, Archives Services: LA. III. 363. 1, ff. 1-47, ‘Letters & papers Robert Foulis & co. 1751-64’ (f. 28). While this language never made it out of draft proposals or private letters, illustrated editions relating to military instruction were printed in 1768 and 1770.

<sup>21</sup> In recent years this painting has become something of a lightning-rod in the ongoing debate on Glasgow’s complicity with the slave trade: a barely distinguishable slave/ servant in the background was initially thought to have been painted over, but x-ray work carried out by Glasgow Museums determined that the varnish had gathered dirt and the outline had faded over time.

years.<sup>22</sup> As we will see, backing from the University only seemed to encourage progress despite the brothers' snowballing debt.

But where on the campus was the Foulis Academy of Fine Arts located? One of the chief purposes of this essay is to make its location in the College grounds clear by untangling the historical ambiguity and introducing some visual materials that have gone unnoticed. By comparison, we know that St. Luke's Academy in Edinburgh was founded in October 1729, making use of College buildings south of the Cowgate by the time it closed two years later.<sup>23</sup> We will see that the Foulis Academy was an extensive and burgeoning school from its inception in 1753 to its closure in June 1776 and that, by the very nature of its incorporation with the University, made use of more than one area of the College. In 2014 Mungo Campbell of the Hunterian discussed the identifiable features of the engraving by David Allan (1744-96) showing the interior of the Academy [Fig. 1].

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<sup>22</sup> For more on this see John Turpin, *A School of Art in Dublin Since the Eighteenth Century: A History of the National College of Art and Design* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1995).

<sup>23</sup> See the new interactive map 'Edinburgh's Enlightenment 1680-1750', a resource of the Royal Society of Edinburgh funded project 'Allan Ramsay and Edinburgh in the First Age of Enlightenment'.





Fig. 1: 'The Foulis Academy of Fine Arts' (1760) by David Allan.

He argued that this *must* show the University Library designed by the aforementioned William Adam, built separate to the College block between 1732 and 1745.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the 1726 plan of the Library and a nineteenth-century photograph by Thomas Annan put this beyond doubt [Figs. 2 & 3].

<sup>24</sup> Mungo Campbell, "...A remote location where it is not needed": Acquisition, Education and Reputation in Enlightenment Glasgow', *Georgian Glasgow Symposium: Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum*, 19 May 2014; William Gemmell made the same point about the windows in his *Early Views of Glasgow chiefly from The Foulis Academy of Art with descriptive and historical letterpress*, v. 1 (Glasgow: David Robertson & Co: 1913).



But in truth, we have become overly reliant on Allan's sketch, taking it and the oil-sketch counterpart (1761), as a representation of the Academy in its entirety.<sup>25</sup> There is much more to the story than this one building. In his *Life of Adam Smith* (1895), John Rae suggested that after the establishment of the Academy the Foulis brothers were given the 'Faculty Hall' for their venture.<sup>26</sup> In 1913, David Murray suggested otherwise, quoting the novelist Mary Ann Hanway, who saw the new Library in 1775 and said: '[it is] a very noble room with a gallery round it, supported by pillars; there is likewise a very good collection of original pictures shown here.'<sup>27</sup> William Gemmell (1913) concurred, revising the assumption made by Andrew MacGeorge in his history of Glasgow (1880) that Allan has captured a scene in the 'Fore Hall' of the College.<sup>28</sup> Gordon (1999) and Fairfull-Smith (2001) agree with the majority that the Academy was held in the Library. But what of these halls?

A fresh reading of the Memorials and letters from the 1750s prompts a reinterpretation of the Academy's location as being held undoubtedly in the Library, but also in designated rooms in the main College building. Firstly, we should extend upon Gemmell's distinction: that the Academy was once 'in the room under the north part of the new Library,' and that by the time David Allan 'drew his view of it in 1760, the class was held in the large chamber on the first floor, and the windows faced the east.'<sup>29</sup> This movement within the Library in the early years of the Academy seems to have been overlooked. A contemporary letter to the Principal, Dean of Faculty, and Professors of the University of Glasgow states that 'the Faculty unanimously

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<sup>25</sup> The oil sketch is hung in the Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow. When compared with the original work, subtle differences can be seen, offering us two, rather than one, scenes of the same interior.

<sup>26</sup> John Rae, *Life of Adam Smith* (London: Macmillan & co., 1895), 72.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 98.

<sup>28</sup> William Gemmell, *Early Views of Glasgow chiefly from The Foulis Academy of Art with descriptive and historical letterpress*, v. 1 (Glasgow: David Robertson & Co: 1913), p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

assign'd [Robert Foulis] the lower part of the New Library.' Apparently, the 'room on the left' was chosen on the advice of the engraver Aveline 'as the fittest for a model to stand in.' Confusion may arise from the disparate descriptors 'under...upper...lower', especially when the chief evidence in distinguishing the layout of the Academy derives from the impression of a sixteen year-old David Allan (who, ironically for us, picked out the word 'Perspective' from an open textbook in the foreground of his engraving). We must not assume that his view from 1760 represents the Academy as it was in 1753. If the architectural plan for the Library is turned round and aligned with John McArthur's *Plan of the City of Glasgow* (1778), the situation can be clarified.

Firstly, Gemmell's description 'in the room under the north part' must mean the lower floor. The contemporary account of the 'lower part' seems to agree with this, and as both large rooms on both floors benefited from the same eastern light it can be concluded that the Academy as we know it was originally housed in the lower floor and was moved upstairs by 1760. With the layout of the library in mind, the contemporary account of the 'room on the left' must mean the larger of the two rooms on that floor. The writer goes on to describe William Cullen (1710-1790) making use of the 'other room' (perhaps the smaller chamber on the other side of the staircase) for storing medical utensils. He kindly removed the equipment in the Spring of 1755 when a new painter arrived and the number of pupils rose to ten. This tells us that the Academy made use of both rooms on the lower floor and most likely the top floor by 1755. Besides the increasing activity of the pupils and the curious public inspecting the library, dampness might have also forced movement: the memorialist describes a rotted floor and mouldy books on the lower level and the constant lighting of fires to keep the dampness at bay. It is also reported that Robert Foulis secured his place in the library by joining separate pieces of cast plaster inside it so

that removing the finished whole intact would prove impossible. The memorialist seems keenly aware of this cunning move, pledging: 'I hope the Gentlemen of the University Meeting would think it very unbecoming their character to destroy the only cast that has been made from the mould of one of the best statues of antiquity; to the original of which there has been no access for moulding for many years.' Finally, it is reported that Robert Foulis successfully petitioned to have access to the cellar of the library for storage purposes, so that 'the passage might be more decent, when strangers of distinction come to see the progress of the young men.'<sup>30</sup> The right edge of Allan's engraving shows this passage bedecked with busts, statuettes, and tools; again suggesting the brothers' free reign over the Library by 1760.

Having established the movement in and around the Academy, the situation in the main building can also be clarified through contemporary letters. In his reminiscences of College days James Wordrow (1730-1810) described 'a few boys working with their pencils' in one of the College halls. Perhaps this was the 'Faculty' (or 'Fore') Hall which has occasionally been described as the location of the Academy itself. Wordrow was rarely in Glasgow after February 1753, at which point he became an active clergyman in the Presbytery of Ayr, so he would not have witnessed the art teaching going on in the new Library.<sup>31</sup> Emphasis should be placed on 'new' here because Wordrow served as the Librarian to the University from 1750 until his departure, during which time he claims: 'I never saw [Robert Foulis] in the library, seldom, very seldom, in his own bookselling shop within the college, where I often was.' Of course, Robert was abroad for much of this time. The ageing Wordrow may not have known, or forgot, this during his account. Indeed, we can conclude that the new Library, housing the Academy by

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<sup>30</sup> 'Letters & papers Robert Foulis & co. 1751-64,' f. 30.

<sup>31</sup> Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Wordrow, James (1730-1810)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/64383>, accessed July 2016].

1753, and almost exclusively by 1755, was not the main repository for the University's stock of books. According to Gemmell, many of the books remained 'untransferred' during the first few years of the Academy.<sup>32</sup> During a visit to Glasgow in the summer of 1754, the preacher Samuel Davies (1723-1761) was given a tour of the College by William Leechman (1706-1785), including the 'Library-Room', which he described as 'large, but not well filled.'<sup>33</sup> This confirms a transition of books but also adds to the confusion. Which Library is being described?

It appears that by 1763 Robert Foulis had a private lodging in a garret above the 'Old Library', which, according to a testimony by Professor John Anderson (1726-1796), was being used for teaching by other Professors. This 'Old Library' must have been housed in the main building: for the 'New Library' was still new, and one library could not have been used by both the Academy's teachers and the Professors at the same time.<sup>34</sup> Our over-reliance on David Allan sketches is further exposed when we consider Francis Hirst's book on Adam Smith, in which he goes as far as to describe Foulis as a 'father' of the University's extension movement and technical instruction, making use of College 'rooms' for the Academy.<sup>35</sup> In the Memorial, it is argued that 'the seat of an University was, of all others, the properest to bring [the fine arts] to the highest perfection.' James Moor wrote in a letter to the Commissioners of the Board of Customs in Scotland that 'all the fine arts are naturally allied to polite Literature,' forming one half of the 'proper pair of a Liberal and Genteel education.' Indeed, this inscription of Glasgow as a seat of the arts was made explicit and figurative in the cover of a 1758 production of the

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<sup>32</sup> Gemmell (1913), p. 91 n67.

<sup>33</sup> [Samuel Davies], *The Reverend Samuel Davies abroad: the diary of a journey to England and Scotland, 1753-55*, edited by George William Pilcher (Illinois: The University of Illinois Press, 1967), pp. 101-102.

<sup>34</sup> Glasgow University Archives, GUA26883: 'Answer by John Anderson to Dr Trail's dissent to be inserted in the minute of the University of Glasgow meeting concerning the allocation of rooms to the Messrs Foulis, 4 Apr 1769.'

<sup>35</sup> Francis W. Hirst, *Adam Smith [English Men of Letters ser.]*, (London: Macmillan & Co, 1904), p. 99. As helpful as his discussion of Robert Foulis being part of a Glasgow core of improvers is, Hirst is tantalising about the location of these rooms.

Foulis press: *A Catalogue of Pictures, Drawings, Prints, Statues and Busts in Plaister of Paris, done at the Academy in the University of Glasgow* [Fig. 4].



Fig. 4: *A Catalogue of Pictures, Drawings, Prints, Statues and Busts in Plaister of Paris, done at the Academy in the University of Glasgow* (Glasgow: Robert & Andrew Foulis, 1758).

At first glance the image is seemingly unambiguous in its classicism: the British Isles feature on the globe above the Latin motto 'Art is long | Life is short'. Other elements within the image represent crucially overlooked meanings. The main figure atop the globe (Calliope, the Greek

Muse of Epic Poetry) is holding in her left hand a statuette of Lady Britannia. Calliope certainly represents the brothers' print culture of classical texts. Whether her handling of Lady Britannia symbolises the triumph of the arts over Empire or the potential use of Empire to convey the arts is up for debate. More important is the object in her right hand: a tablet showing a plan or layout. In most depictions of Calliope, she holds a tablet or book representative of classical Greek literature: an appropriate choice for the brothers indeed. Here, however, they have inscribed the location of their Academy of which this catalogue takes account. By comparing it with the layout of the College on McArthur's *Plan of the City*, the similarity becomes obvious; especially in the L-shaped building that we know to be the University library [Fig. 5].

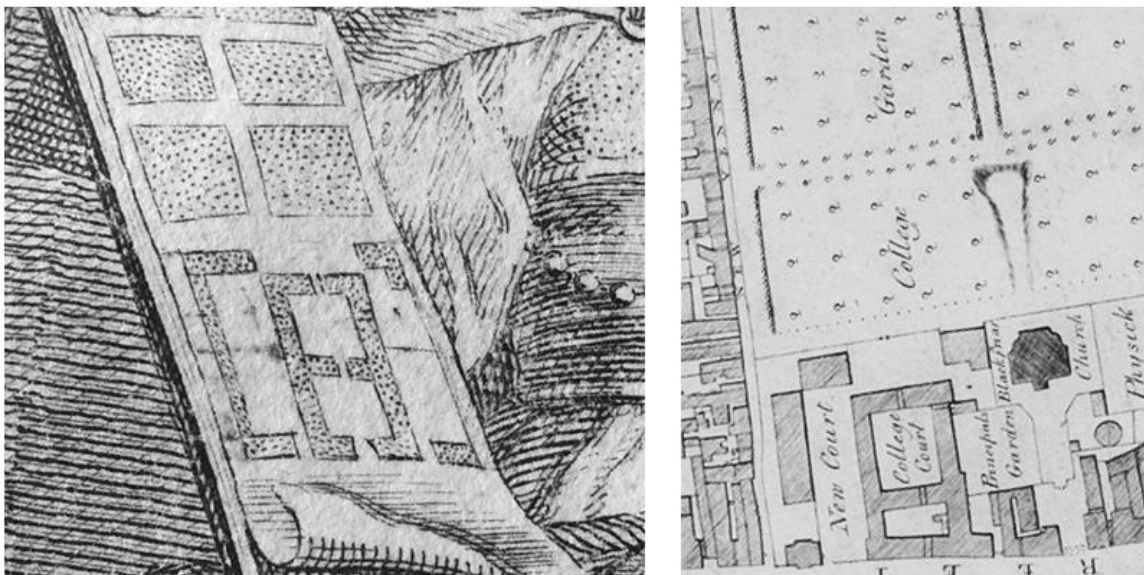


Fig. 5: cropped sections of the *Catalogue* (1758) and *Plan of the City* (1778).

It is unfortunate that this image has gone unnoticed for so long. Given the many connections between the brothers and the leaders of Glasgow's Enlightenment, their precise location in the city would surely make their impact seem all the more likely and memorable.



## II. *The Impact of the Academy on the Press*

No sooner was the Academy up and running did it face criticism. Within weeks of its opening, one William Sturrock wrote to Robert Foulis: 'I cannot help thinking [...] that a correct & well printed book would be more agreeable to us from your press than anything else. These will ornament, & with great lustres too, as well as real Profit, the libraries of Popes & Princes, which your Prints ly mouldering in dusty corner.' He goes on to say that Archibald Campbell, third Duke of Argyll (1682-1761) and 'all men of sense wish you more success in Printing than in Painting or Sculpture.'<sup>36</sup> Joseph Black and Adam Smith apparently advised against the brothers' approach to the Academy.<sup>37</sup> Writing in 1757, Sir John Dalrymple (1726-1810) begged Robert to take their advice, suggesting that he should have his pupils work on 'what will sell the best' as opposed to 'what you think the best.'<sup>38</sup> Robert's all-encompassing taste for the classics, rooted as we know it to be in Hutcheson's inspired classicism, seems to have been perceived more as a vanity project than a useful, if unprecedented, contribution to an increasingly mercantile city. Dalrymple pulls no punches: 'Take my word for it [...] very few of [the subscribers] give one farthing either for the fine arts or for you, and for that reason it is your duty in common sense to draw in your scheme, to sell off all superfluities, and to bring it into a mercantile affair as much as you can.'<sup>39</sup> This is the general viewpoint we have today: an Academy doomed to fail from the beginning. Looking back, Wodrow opined that the Academy was opened fifty years too soon 'for the opulence and improvement of Scotland in the Fine Arts.' His fellow students also deemed it

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<sup>36</sup> Mitchell Library, 32225 (ff.1-2), 'Correspondence of Robert and Andrew Foulis'.

<sup>37</sup> Murray (1913), 73-4

<sup>38</sup> Rae, 75

<sup>39</sup> William J. Duncan, *Notices and Documents illustrative of The Literary History of Glasgow, during the greater part of the last century* (Glasgow: 1831), p. 26.

an overly romantic scheme.<sup>40</sup> On top of this, Robert made the mistake of choosing Roman Catholic Saints as subjects for the earliest prints done in the Academy. As Gemmell puts it, these images would excite ‘anything but enthusiasm’ in Glasgow. The religious and political leanings of the brothers are far from central to this essay, but based on this image of Glasgow as a Presbyterian stronghold during this period it is perhaps easier to understand their limited options for support. Indeed, early Foulis productions of the Jacobite Sir Andrew Ramsay help paint this picture.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, their liaisons with Father Thomas Innes in the Scots College in Paris provoked an ‘old soldier of Drumclog’ to attack Robert Foulis in the following letter:

I am obliged to believe you were received by your baptism a member thereof, if you have not renounced it, when you received the lick of the mug in the Popish Church in France; if you have done so, pray discover yourself... I advise you to go back to France, and trade and traffick there, for indeed your ware is not the commodity that Scotland, especially Glasgow and the West of Scotland, hath use for.<sup>42</sup>

Robert Foulis grew understandably wary over time. The initial flowering of the Academy seemed to be causing more trouble than expected. In his letter to William Hunter in 1766, he said: ‘The Fine Arts do not ripen quickly, especially in a cold climate: but if once brought to maturity it is to be hoped they will naturalize and leave Successors wherever they are blown.’<sup>43</sup>

By then, the resources of the Academy were stretched thin by the ambitious, interconnected press

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<sup>40</sup> MS Murray 506, f. 133.

<sup>41</sup> Drawing the support of the King is mentioned in several of Robert Foulis letters. This obviously never came to fruition, despite their exhibition of loyalty by holding their art shows on the King’s birthday. In the Earl of Buchan’s poem, references in note 4, above, Robert is referred to as ‘honest Foulis.’ This Jacobite code-word only adds to the conjectural evidence that the brothers were Jacobites.

<sup>42</sup> Glasgow University Library Special Collections Department, Mu.21-c39, relating to Gabriel Neil, *The Poetical Remains of the Late James Moor; As Printed in a series of papers in the “Northern Notes and Queries”* (Glasgow, 1853).

<sup>43</sup> David Murray, ‘Some Letters of Robert Foulis (continued)’, *The Scottish Historical Review* 14:55 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1917), pp. 249-271 (254).

and Academy, both of which operated unceasingly together since 1754. McEwan has suggested that its demise was inevitable because ‘it was modelled on the Italian approach to art instruction,’ whereas the [Trustees] Academy in Edinburgh made use of a more financially viable apprenticeship system.<sup>44</sup> That cultivating the fine arts distracted the brothers from their printing venture has often been cited, but little has been done to draw out the evidence, and even less to illustrate how the Academy improved the famous press.<sup>45</sup>

First, we should remember that the most famous Foulis text (‘The Glasgow Homer’) was produced during the heyday of the Academy’s opening decade. If the brothers had shifted their intellectual focus as dramatically as has been suggested, they would never have been able to make progress on both fronts for as long as they did. We should therefore rethink their roles. Robert initiated the publishing firm, Andrew joined later and took over the business while Robert was abroad. Andrew has never been recorded as a full partner in the Academy, though we can assume his support. While both brothers are depicted in the Allan’s impression of the interior of the Library, there is little mention of Andrew as being part of it. Again, this speaks to the over-reliance of the brothers as a unit: diving headlong into the business of the fine arts and leaving their printing behind. Robert was very much the man of ‘ideas’ – delivering papers mostly on the arts to the Glasgow Literary Society – while Andrew was the man of ‘affairs.’<sup>46</sup>

To understand the impact of the Foulis Academy on their famous publishing firm the core years of their coexistence must also be reviewed. Irwin and Irwin have outlined the art texts the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Captain Edward Topham also (1751-1820) bemoaned that ‘during the rage of this fancy, [the Academy] they forgot their former business, and neglected an art which, from their editions of Homer and Milton, might have made them immortal, to run after paltry copies of good paintings, which they had been informed were originals.’ See Murray (1913), p. 91.

<sup>46</sup> On the contrasting characters of the brothers there are many references. See the remarks made by James Wodrow, above, (MS Murray 506, f. 129), and Gemmell (1913), p. 8; for more on Robert and Andrew’s activity in the College and the Glasgow Literary Society, see Ralph R. McLean, *Rhetoric and literary criticism in the early Scottish Enlightenment* (PhD thesis: University of Glasgow, 2009), p. 130.

brothers published upon the opening of their Academy in an attempt to rouse public interest. The first was Charles Coypel's *Dialogue sur la connaissance de la Peinture* (1753/54), followed by Charles-Alphonse Dufresnoy's *A Judgement on Painters* (1755). Using Gaskell's *Bibliography* it can be seen that the number of unsigned frontispieces, plates, and illustrations increases as the Academy grows: showing an implementation of the pupils' work in published editions. Though famed for their minimalist style, the brothers did make use of illustration before their Academy opened. The first, Thomas More's *Utopia* (1743), featured an engraved frontispiece portrait of the author by Samuel Taylor: a Glasgow-based artist who signed three plates in the first history of Glasgow by John M'Ure in 1736. The following year Robert printed the *Works* of Pindar with a copper-plate portrait frontispiece signed by Robert Strange (1721-1792), a member of the Academies of St. Luke in Edinburgh and Rome, as well as the Royal Academy in Paris.<sup>47</sup> The Foulis production of William Hamilton's *Poems on Several Occasions* in 1749 contained yet another copper-plate frontispiece portrait. With these three texts there is sufficient evidence, particularly with Strange and his connection with the continental Academies that Robert was thinking along the lines of an art school from the earliest years of his publishing.

As suggested, more illustrations were produced with their books as time went on, including the editions of Torquato Tasso's *Aminta* (1753) with its with plates after Sébastien Le Clerc (1637-1714); Giovanni Battista Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* (1763), again with seven plates after Le Clerc, and Tasso's *Le Gierusalemme Liberata* (1763) with its two frontispieces and twenty numbered plates after Le Clerc. This combination of classical print culture and artistic skill did not go unnoticed: the three plates of Greek statues in their edition of Callimachus'

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<sup>47</sup> Peter J M McEwan, *The Dictionary of Scottish Art and Architecture* (Ballater: Glengarden Press, 2004), 1; Timothy Clayton, 'Strange, Sir Robert (1725–1792)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26638>, accessed July 2016].

*Hymns and Epigrams* (1755) won the Foulis press the silver medal of the Select Society in Edinburgh, before their Homer was recognised by the same. By that point many illustrations were unsigned: probably done by pupils of the Academy. For instance the Foulis edition of Joseph Addison's *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy* (1755) came with a folding plate of twelve medals; *The Art of Land-measuring Explained* (1757) by John Gray with nine plates and numerous woodcut diagrams; a plate of abbreviations and contractions aided James Moor's *Elementa Linguae Graecae* (1766; 1773); and folding maps were made to guide the reader of their editions of *Iliad* (1767; 1771) and Boswell's *An Account of Corsica* (1768). These fruits of the Academy undoubtedly increased the diversity and usefulness of the press, harking back to Robert's desire to provide illustrations in books with ideas that 'cannot be so well conveyed by words only.'

The most ambitious productions of pupils' work in the Foulis press were introduced to the market in the 1770s. The first was *The Gallery of Raphael* (1770): a volume of fifty-four prints based on frescoes painted by Raphael, copied by James Mitchell (fl. 1750-74) and William Buchanan (1736-72).<sup>48</sup> Buchanan had not long died when *The Seven Cartoons of Raphael* (1773) was produced. It was apparently much sought after, being a high-watermark of the Academy's influence on the press and an unparalleled venture into fine art by a renowned name in publishing.<sup>49</sup> It is here that we can assume the co-operation of Robert's art venture and Andrew's diligence with their printing. Murray described the *Cartoons* as a product of both the press and the Academy, a truth that has been mostly overshadowed by the narrative of financial ruin so

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<sup>48</sup> George Fairfull-Smith, *The Foulis Press and The Foulis Academy: Glasgow's Eighteenth Century School of Art and Design* (Glasgow: The Glasgow Art Index in association with the Friends of Glasgow University Library, 2001), 55.

<sup>49</sup> Murray, 88.

often attributed to the brothers in their final years. On the other hand William Duncan lays the blame squarely with the Academy, saying:

The prosperity of the Foulises may from this period be considered as on the decline, and the energy with which their business had been conducted seems now to have been completely wanting. “The Seven Cartoons of Raphael,” formerly at Hampton Court, and now in the Queen's Palace appeared, indeed, in 1773, but they must be considered rather as one of the last efforts of their Academy than of their press.<sup>50</sup>

But this assertion is too simple, doing nothing to understand how these two burgeoning institutions were meant to coincide and how they actually affected one another.<sup>51</sup> It is not as though the Academy damaged the reputation of the brothers’ contemporaries entirely. Their annual open-air exhibitions in the Inner Court of the College brought in large crowds for well over ten years; they met the famous bookseller and publisher John Murray (1737-1793) who would go on to help Robert’s son, Andrew Foulis the younger (1756-1829) sell his illustrated edition of Allan Ramsay’s *The Gentle Shepherd* (1788) in London; and Academy pupil James Mitchell worked on some of the plates for *Anatomy of the Gravid Uterus* (1774), Hunter’s renowned medical text.<sup>52</sup> That all this was done in the University Library is more than likely. As this essay has established, the Academy had more than just the upper floor of the Library as its domain. It is nonetheless interesting that besides inscribing the College campus on the front of the 1758 *Catalogue*, there is more emphasis drawn to the library in the engravings of Robert Paul

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<sup>50</sup> Duncan, 36-7.

<sup>51</sup> Following the death of Robert (1776) and Andrew the elder (1775), there are more examples of the Academy pupils contributing to this new print culture, including John Murray’s London edition of James Thomson’s *The Seasons* (1778). The emergence of Scottish romantic writing seemed to manifest itself elsewhere in Scotland also, where former Academy pupil Rev. Charles Cordiner (1746-1794) published *Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland* (1780) and *Remarkable Ruins and Romantic Prospects of North Britain* (1788-95).

<sup>52</sup> Murray, 88; William Zachs, *The First John Murray and the Late Eighteenth-Century London Book Trade* (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by the Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 107.

(1739-1770), whose topographical views of Glasgow consist the greater part of the surviving material culture of the Academy. Together, these views offer a panoramic view of Glasgow from all perspectives. Two of his engravings in particular are worth noting. They are 'A View of Glasgow from the South-East' and 'A View of the Middle Walk in the College-garden' (both 1762): each containing a disproportionate rendering of the Library/Academy exterior [see Figs. 6 & 7].

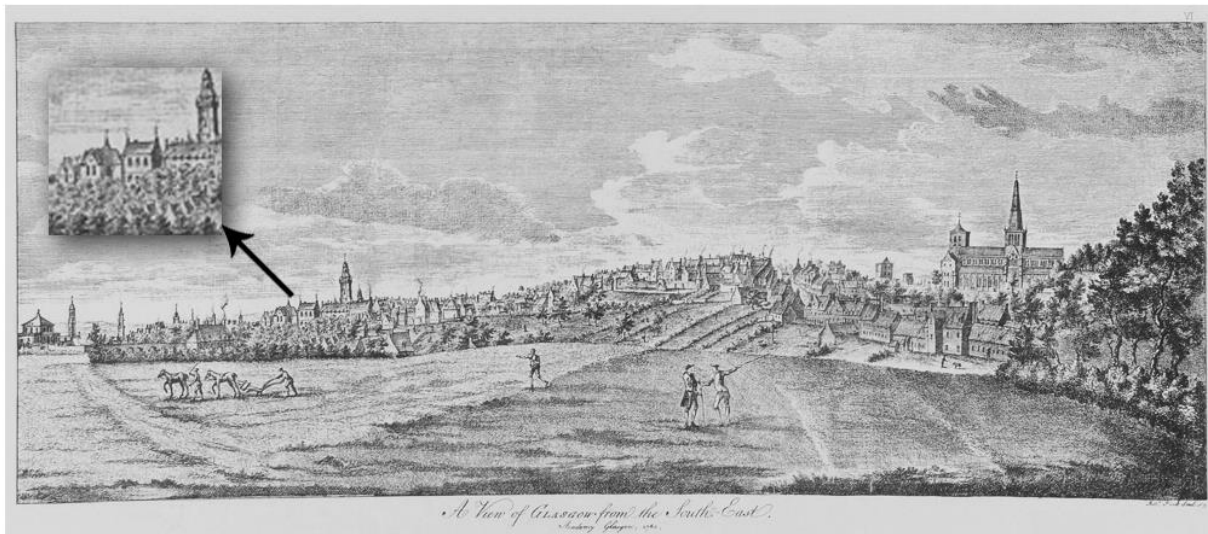


Fig. 6: 'A View of Glasgow from the South-East' (1762) by Robert Paul, with highlight.



Fig. 7: 'A View of the Middle Walk in the College-garden' (1762) by Robert Paul, with highlight.

I propose that his emphasis on the three arched windows on two stories is a deliberate attempt to recall Allan's 'Interior' and inscribe his fellow pupils' main classroom, giving it prominence in the College grounds and in Glasgow's skyline. It was only ever engraved again in the background to Joseph Swan's view of the Hunterian (1828).

But more can be said about the coexistence of the Academy and the press. It has already been shown that the former had a profound impact on the visual diversity and aesthetic of the latter. Consider, for instance, the trends in book production from the commencement of the press until the close of the Academy. The largest drop in book production aligns with the first working year of the Academy in 1754. We can assume that the venture into the fine arts was in fact detrimental to the press at first: the only other downturn of three years or more occurred before the Academy was established: from 17 books in 1743 to 10 in 1746. But many, if not all, accounts of the brothers have overlooked a period of steady growth in book production between 1767 and 1770: from 11 books per year to 21. While this is of course dwarfed by that dramatic spike in book production between 1749 and 1751 (when the press peaked at 41 books in a year), it is clear that publishing did not consistently suffer during the running of the Academy. It is also impossible to know whether the Foulis press would have been able to maintain an average of 35-40 books per year, Academy or no. What is more, this neglected period of growth at the end of the 1760s coincides with a peak in their production of illustrated books.<sup>53</sup> This did, however, come at a cost. During that year, the expenditure of the Academy rose to an all-time-high of £1508.2s.9d.<sup>54</sup> The brothers were adding £50-100 to their debts per year since the Academy opened. They managed to finally reign in costs by 1770, but their most expensive year had yet to

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<sup>53</sup> Information gathered from tabulating Gaskell's *Bibliography* (1986)

<sup>54</sup> A list of expenses and debts incurred by the Foulis brothers was compiled by Andrew Foulis the younger, in the 'The Memorial of Andrew Foulis,' MS: Mitchell Library: 553223.



come. In 1772, their expenditure leapt from around £1400 to £1600. All told, it is clear that they were never making enough from their publishing or art dealing to offset the rising costs of running conjoined Enlightenment enterprises. That their book production managed to increase as their debts grew suggests that the financial weight of managing both was never too great a distraction. Yes, it affected their legacy and ultimately made it more difficult for Andrew Foulis the younger, but the brothers must have been confident that the University's backing would keep them in business. The point must also be made that the final few years of the Academy cost less than in the beginning, revealing a final attempt to cut costs: hardly the blazing nosedive into the footnotes of art history that we have come to accept.<sup>55</sup>

The fruits of the Foulis brothers' labour should be considered in both their schemes. Former Academy pupil David Steuart Erskine, eleventh Earl of Buchan (1742-1829), draws a line between their books and their fine arts: a double expression of the classical humanist education the brothers themselves received at the University. His words were an echo of the 'Memorial of Robert Foulis & Company' in which it is stated:

This undertaking, tho in a remote corner, has had the good fortune to awaken the attention of many in different parts of the kingdom [...] In carrying on the design, the undertakers found it proper to unite the various parts, to cultivate drawing & modelling as the foundations, and to add painting, engraving, & every thing relative to the casting of figure.<sup>56</sup>

The cultivation of the classics in the 'remote corner' of Glasgow was always an uphill struggle, though the brothers themselves were generally undeterred in their synchronised ventures. We

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid. Though the initial £5000 spent on pictures from abroad meant that whatever money could be raised from sales would never be able to solve their debts.

<sup>56</sup> 'Memorial of Robert Foulis & Company,' Edinburgh University Library, Archives Services: LA. III. 363. 1, ff. 1-47 (f. 8).

only have to remember Robert's use of the term 'cold climate' in his letter to Hunter to glimpse his awareness of the frosty reception the art school faced. In the Memorial of his son Andrew, the same argument is made. The 'zeal,' said Andrew, 'which arises from the desire of doing good is certainly preferable to that coldness of disposition which always finds self-interest the first objection to any scheme directed to public utility.'<sup>57</sup> Indeed, it is easy to empathise with Andrew's bitterness towards the unfortunate legacy of his father and uncle. Their classical books and artworks are testament to their liberal education: a virtue that was intrinsic to the growth of the Scottish Enlightenment. That it flourished in Glasgow's University so abundantly is clear in the extant print and visual culture, though it is ironic that the fertile ground of the old city was bulldozed on behalf of the railway companies: the very motion James Watt (1736-1819) unwittingly sparked into life as he strode through Glasgow Green in 1765 with the improvements for a new steam engine in mind. A stone marks the spot where the idea was conceived. On Ingram Street, a paving stone in the shape of a folio volume commemorates Robert and Andrew Foulis. And while it is understandable that the Foulis Academy of Arts has been forgotten over the centuries, it is hoped that this essay improves our understanding of its place and its purpose in eighteenth-century Glasgow.

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<sup>57</sup> 'The Memorial of Andrew Foulis.'